

**TESTIMONY OF**  
**ACTING COMMISSIONER KEVIN D. ROONEY**  
**IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE (INS)**

**BEFORE THE**  
**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION AND CLAIMS**  
**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**CONCERNING**  
  
**IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE**  
**OVERSIGHT HEARING**

**MAY 15, 2001**

## **Introduction**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Jackson Lee, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide an overview of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) operations, accomplishments and challenges in the context of the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 budget request. This INS budget request builds upon the accomplishments that have been achieved with strong congressional support. The resources Congress has provided have enabled INS to meet new challenges and strengthen the Nation's immigration system. They have resulted in improvements in how we enforce immigration laws and how we deliver services to our customers.

INS has already demonstrated over the past several years that when the agency is provided with resources and employs coherent strategies, it can achieve dramatic results. These accomplishments include

- illegal entries in San Diego reduced to a 25-year low;
- effective management of detention growth – 6,000 to over 19,000 beds in 7 years;
- removed 362,000 illegal aliens in the past 2 years – 126,000 criminals;
- from 1993 to 2000, received and processed more applications for citizenship than during the previous 40 years combined;
- reduced pending naturalization applications from 2.2 million in February, 1999 to 716,000 in February, 2001;
- nearly doubled the number of permanent employees in less than 8 years; and
- computer access within the workforce grew from 20% to 95% in 7 years.

The President's FY 2002 budget for INS continues to support the immigration goals and strategies that the agency has pursued over the past several years. The thrust of INS' FY 2002 budget is to extend the ongoing initiatives aimed at controlling the Nation's borders and maintaining the physical integrity of those borders. INS intends to build on its successful multi-year strategy to: effectively regulate the border; deter and dismantle organizations that smuggle or traffic aliens and narcotics; identify and remove detained criminal aliens from the United States, including terrorists, and minimize recidivism; enhance services and reduce processing backlogs; and reduce immigration benefit fraud and other document abuse. Overall, the FY 2002 budget request for the Immigration and Naturalization Service totals \$5.5 billion, a 10 percent increase over the FY 2001 funding level. This budget includes \$380 million in enhancements to a base funding level of \$5.1 billion. The budget will add a total of 1,364 new staff positions, which will allow INS to grow to over 36,200 workyears by the end of FY 2002.

## **BORDER MANAGEMENT**

In February 1994, INS implemented an innovative, multi-year strategy to strengthen enforcement of the nation's immigration laws and to disrupt the traditional illegal immigration corridors along the nation's Southwest border. Under this bold

strategy, new personnel, backed with equipment and infrastructure improvements, are deployed in targeted areas each year, starting with the most vulnerable areas. This strategy treats the entire border as a single, seamless entity. Enforcement activities between the ports-of-entry are integrated fully with those taking place in the ports, which the strategy recognizes as both vital to the nation's economy and potential entry points for criminals and contraband. As a result, INS has been able to enhance its enforcement capabilities while dramatically reducing waiting times for those trying to cross the border legally. The strategy uses a phased approach beginning in the Southwest until control is achieved nationwide.

Considerable success has been achieved in restoring integrity and safety to the Southwest border by implementing the strategy through well-laid-out multi-year operations, such as Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, Operation Hold the Line in El Paso, Operation Rio Grande in McAllen, and Operation Safeguard in Tucson. The initial phases of these operations typically result in an increase in apprehensions, reflecting the deployment of more agents and enhanced technology. However, as the deterrent effect takes hold, the number of apprehensions declines as the operation gains control over the area.

Recognizing that protecting the border includes an obligation to protect lives, the Border Patrol launched the Border Safety Initiative in 1998. This is a joint initiative between the U.S. and Mexico, and is now an integral component of our border control strategy. In the past year, Border Patrol Agents have rescued more than 2,500 aliens who were injured, in distress, or victims of violence while attempting to make an illegal entry.

### **Border Patrol Recruiting and Hiring**

In FY 2000, INS experienced record increases in the number of Border Patrol applicants and hires as a result of: (a) a more focused, local recruitment process, (b) the training of 300 Border Patrol Agents as recruiters, (c) intensified advertising, and (d) offering a \$2,000 recruitment signing bonus. The enhanced recruitment program was supported in part by \$1.5 million included in the FY 2000 appropriation for these efforts. The Border Patrol has been able to attract sufficient numbers of applicants to meet hiring goals through FY 2001. The INS is currently recruiting to ensure maintenance of a qualified pool of applicants for FY 2002 and is currently not experiencing Border Patrol hiring problems.

In FY 2000, the INS implemented "compressed testing" at 10 Sectors. This allowed applicants to take the written test and receive results immediately upon completion of the exam. If the applicant passed the written exam, he or she could schedule the oral board examination in 2 weeks. This process is 5 or more weeks shorter than the traditional testing process and has resulted in a 44 percent increase in applicants actually showing up to take the test.

In FY 2000, the Border Patrol trained 300 agent recruiters who participated in over 1,400 recruiting events ranging from campus and military job fairs, to open houses, to booths at local malls. Border Patrol recruiters were encouraged to establish personal

contact and feedback with all interested applicants with positive results. We significantly increased advertising and recruitment incentives.

As a result, in FY 2000, the INS achieved a record number of applicants (an 80 percent increase over FY 1999) due to aggressive recruitment and hiring initiatives to address Border Patrol Agent hiring shortfalls. The increase in recruitment provided the applicant pool with sufficient candidates for an associated increase in hiring. In FY 2000, the INS hired 52 percent more agents than in FY 1999.

During this fiscal year, INS has hired 900 new Border Patrol agents and will hire another 700 by the end of the year. Our training classes are already full through July.

### **Inspections**

The INS' border management and control efforts have made a significant impact on the border. In FY 2000, INS carried out immigration inspections for nearly 438 million travelers at the land borders and nearly 92 million travelers at airports and seaports. In FY 2001, these inspections are projected to reach 450 million at the land border and 98 million at airports and seaports, with continued growth in FY 2002. The INS has set FY 2001 performance targets of 80 percent of land border inspections in 20 minutes or less, and 72 percent of air flights cleared within 30 minutes. The INS will also continue the use of automated systems such as dedicated commuter lanes to facilitate the flow of inspection traffic for low risk travelers.

### **Border Management – FY 2002 Request**

The FY 2002 budget includes an additional 570 Border Patrol Agents and \$75 million to support the border control strategy. We would propose that these resources be primarily directed to the Southwest border so as to increase the emphasis provided to the eastern California, Arizona and Texas borders. These new agents, plus 570 in FY 2003, will complete the 5,000-agent increase authorized by the Congress in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. With these 1,140 additional agents, the total increase of 5,000 Border Patrol Agents will be achieved, and the authorized strength of the Border Patrol will be about 11,000.

The FY 2002 budget also requests \$20 million so that deployment of intrusion detection technology, including high-resolution color and infrared cameras and state-of-the-art command centers, will continue. This technology acts as a “force multiplier” to supplement the new agents and provide continuous monitoring of the border from remote sites. This combination of intrusion detection technology and the increased number of Border Patrol Agents will permit INS to enforce the rule of law and enhance border management over larger portions of the U.S. border. This technology assists agents in determining the source of the “hit,” including the number of intruders, and if they are visibly armed, thereby increasing agent safety. The Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System (ISIS) enhancement is an important part of the overall strategy for strengthening control of the borders against illegal entry. ISIS will improve remote detection and tracking capabilities, resulting in increased deterrence of illegal border crossing and

increased officer safety. Ultimately, it will provide the INS, in particular, the Border Patrol, with the capability to monitor effectively the integrity of the U.S./Mexico and U.S./Canada national boundaries for purposes of border management.

The INS Intelligence program provides strategic and tactical intelligence support to INS offices enforcing the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act, and assists other federal agencies in addressing national security issues. Intelligence program activities contribute support to preventing the entry of illegal aliens, terrorists and narcotics traffickers; identifying and dismantling alien smuggling operations; detecting fraudulent documents and false claims to U.S. citizenship; and detecting other individuals or organizations involved in the manufacture and sale of counterfeit documents, in application and benefit fraud schemes, and in other related criminal activity. The FY 2002 budget includes 78 positions and \$7 million to expand the intelligence program on the northern and southern borders of the U.S.

### **Infrastructure Improvements**

The INS continues to face a number of significant challenges in maintaining its infrastructure during a period of rapid growth. New and expanded facilities are required to support a work force of over 32,000. The Border Patrol's infrastructure needs are most serious and have been and continue to be given priority attention. Since the authorization of the INS Construction Account in FY 1995, the Congress has provided much-needed resources to allow INS to replace, expand and renovate facilities and to enhance border infrastructure. The INS budget request for FY 2002 continues support for critical infrastructure requirements. It includes \$75 million for construction projects. This total includes \$69 million for Border Patrol and detention construction projects, and \$6 million for additional work on the San Diego Border Barrier System and for the enhancement of border infrastructure through the critical direct support of Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) for projects such as fences, roads, and border barriers.

### **Air and Sea Ports-of-Entry**

INS must balance its resources between its goals of detecting those who should not be allowed to enter the United States and managing legal travel across the borders. The FY 2002 budget request includes \$50 million for 417 new Immigration Inspectors to staff newly-activated air and sea port terminals, high-growth understaffed gateway ports, and coordinated INS/U.S. Customs passenger analysis units. The request also includes 122 inspection assistants and clerks, along with detention and removals resources to support the significant increases in workloads at high-growth air and sea ports-of-entry. The budget provides for an expansion of the Carrier Consultant Program to enhance airline carrier training and for the increased workload attributable to the 2002 Winter Olympics.

With these resources, the Service will strive to process 77 percent of all commercial flights within 30 minutes, and make strides in streamlining and automating manual processes, improving data integrity, and supporting enforcement requirements.

To finance these initiatives, the FY 2002 budget would increase the current airport inspections fee by \$1 from \$6 to \$7 for arriving international air passengers. It would also lift the cruise ship fee exemption, instituting a \$3 fee for those passengers currently exempt. The increase is to provide resources to cover more of the true costs of operating the program.

In addition, the FY 2002 budget contains \$26 million to expand significant resources for information technology initiatives. Resources are provided to update the National Automated Inspections Lookout System (NAILS), a centralized lookout database that is a compilation of information supplied by automated systems within INS and other federal and local law enforcement agencies. It is a critical system that contains data on individuals who are inadmissible, including criminals and suspected terrorists. The request includes resources to study technology for automated airport inspection alternatives. This budget will provide resources to purchase Live Scan Devices that will send electronic fingerprint submissions to the FBI, develop the Vessel Inspection Processing System (VIPS), and purchase portable workstations to access NAILS at the seaports. The FY 2002 budget will also provide the initial investments necessary to develop an automated entry/exit system as required in the INS Data Management Improvement Act of 2000.

## **INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT**

The INS is focusing strategically on combating illegal immigration within the nation's interior. A comprehensive interior enforcement strategy was developed that creates a seamless web of enforcement extending from the border, and beyond, to the worksite. It seeks to facilitate internal coordination among the various INS enforcement activities and forge closer ties with other federal, state and local law enforcement and regulatory agencies. The integrated enforcement effort will promote national security, public safety and economic security. The interior enforcement strategy identified five strategic objectives: to identify and remove criminal and other dangerous aliens, deter and diminish alien smuggling, respond to community concerns and build partnerships, minimize benefit fraud and other document abuse, and block access to undocumented workers and remove those located. While each objective is crucial in its own right, highest priority is given to apprehending and removing those criminal aliens who are causing the greatest harm in our communities.

### **Anti-Smuggling and Anti-Fraud Activities**

The INS has a number of significant accomplishments to report in anti-smuggling and anti-fraud operations. During FY 2000, INS disrupted alien smuggling organizations at source countries, the borders and the interior of the United States. The agency used traditional and non-traditional investigative techniques, cooperation and coordination with the FBI, and broadened use of statutory authorities. The INS presented 7 major cases and 2,520 smuggling principals for prosecution. For example, the "Operation Knight Riders" investigation involved a large-scale alien smuggling organization that

specialized in moving large numbers of undocumented aliens from Central and South America and the Middle East into the United States. The successful completion of this case resulted in 9 criminal arrests and the closure of a major smuggling pipeline. In "Operation Telecom," INS investigated and shut down a sophisticated alien smuggling organization that engaged in recruiting and arranging for the smuggling of Chinese nationals from the People's Republic of China. This investigation also involved a law firm that assisted the smugglers by arranging bonds so aliens could be released and returned to the smugglers. The firm also filed fraudulent political asylum claims on behalf of the aliens to ensure that they would remain in the United States.

### **Quick Response Teams and Community Support**

Considerable progress has been made in establishing and staffing the Quick Response Teams (QRTs). In the FY 1999 INS appropriation, Congress provided for the creation of QRTs and directed INS to establish 45 teams with 200 positions. These teams work directly with State and local law enforcement officers to take into custody and remove illegal aliens. Of the 200 QRT officers that have been selected, 193 have entered on duty at their assigned locations. The remaining officers are expected to enter on duty before the end of FY 2001. INS received \$11 million for QRT deployment in the FY 2001 budget. INS will be consulting with Congress on deployment of those resources shortly.

Much has been accomplished with the QRTs. During the first quarter in FY 2001, the teams received 2,532 requests for assistance from State and local law enforcement agencies. This figure reflects the largest number of requests received by the QRTs in any given quarter to date. Of the 2,532 requests, QRTs were able to respond to 92 percent (2,317). The response time for 98 percent of all requests was less than three hours. In addition, QRT officers made 2,246 administrative arrests. Of these arrests, 1,214 individuals were voluntarily returned to their respective countries of citizenship. Special Agents deployed at QRT sites presented 171 individuals for criminal prosecution related to alien smuggling, document fraud, and illegal entry.

In addition to the work accomplished by the QRTs, which are generally deployed to the areas where there is little INS presence and emerging illegal immigrant populations, Special Agents and Immigration Agents in the District Offices also respond to the needs of their communities by participating in many interagency law enforcement task forces. In this context, they contribute their immigration expertise to local, state and federal law enforcement operations in which criminal aliens may be involved, including alien gangs, drug trafficking and terrorism.

### **Detention and Removal**

Since the early 1990's, the average daily population of INS detainees has grown from less than 6,000 to over 19,000. This rate of growth was the result of INS' expanded enforcement capability and changes in detention requirements contained in the IIRIRA of 1996. That law requires the agency to detain without bond many aliens during the

pendency of proceedings who are subject to removal on the basis of a criminal conviction. The INS is also required to detain aliens who have been ordered removed from the United States for up to 90 days or until they are removed, regardless of the basis for the order and the prospects that their home countries will accept their return. As a result, annual removals in FY 2000 were over 180,000. Over 64,000 of these were criminal alien removals. In FY 2001, we project that 67,000 criminal aliens will be removed from the country.

In dealing with the growth in the detention population, INS has issued detailed standards aimed at ensuring consistent treatment and care for all detainees. The standards will apply to INS' 9 Service Processing Centers as well as contract facilities and state and local facilities under intergovernmental service agreements. In addition to standards for safe, secure and humane confinement, they provide for consistent and expanded access to legal representation, telephones and family visits. The standards are being implemented with a phased approach, beginning first with the INS Service Processing Centers.

## **Interior Enforcement - FY 2002 Request**

### **Detention and Removal**

In addition to the expansion of INS' more visible enforcement functions, additional funding will strengthen the detention and removal process. It is critical that INS continue to have resources to efficiently house and repatriate illegal aliens encountered both at the border and through enforcement of immigration laws beyond the immediate border area. To that end, 173 positions and \$89 million are requested in FY 2002 for detention and removal initiatives in the areas of expanded national transportation, improved health services for detained aliens, increased detention bed space, and improved coordination with U.S. Attorneys. Included in the \$89 million is a projected \$40 million in Breached Bond/Detention Fund revenue which is anticipated as a result of the temporary reauthorization of adjustment of status provisions of section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), and \$7 million for detention beds to support increases in workloads at high-growth air and sea ports of entry.

### **Consolidated Detention Bed Space**

To continue to meet the mandatory detention requirements of IIRIRA, the budget request includes \$69 million for 131 positions (68 Detention Enforcement Officers, 33 Deportation Officers, and 30 support positions) and an additional 1,607 average daily state and local detention bed spaces. This initiative includes resources to detain, transport and remove aliens.

### **National Transportation System**

The INS uses the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS), created in 1995 by INS and the U.S. Marshals Service, to transport large numbers of detained aliens each year, transferring them to detention facilities or repatriating them.



The budget includes an increase of \$9 million to fund the costs associated with the INS' share of JPATS. This increase, when combined with current funding, will fund additional air movements to transfer or repatriate detainees.

### **Public Health**

The budget includes funding of \$9 million to support the increased cost of providing health care for detainees. The INS is committed to ensuring that its facilities are safe and humane, and that adequate medical care is provided to aliens in its custody.

### **Coordination with U.S. Attorneys**

The budget includes 42 positions (28 attorneys and 14 support personnel) to enable the INS to better fulfill its role of providing agency counsel support when immigration-related matters arise in the Federal courts. This critical role involves such efforts as preparing litigation reports when lawsuits arise, and coordinating agency witnesses and evidence. These efforts are particularly crucial now in view of the high level of litigation involving the removal of detained aliens, a substantial number of whom are convicted felons.

## **IMMIGRATION SERVICES**

The INS has improved customer service in various respects. Due to an intense, two-year Naturalization Backlog Reduction Initiative, the INS has made tremendous progress in increasing its immigration services' productivity and customer service. In FY 1999, INS met its first stage goal of completing 1.2 million naturalization applications. In FY 2000, the INS again met its naturalization goal by completing approximately 1.3 million applications while achieving a processing time goal of six to nine months nationwide. In FY 2000, INS also completed 564,000 adjustment of status applications, more than in any other year in the INS' history, and outperformed its national processing time goal. The Service also streamlined the "Green Card" renewal process, decreasing the processing time significantly from between 12 and 24 months to 90 days. In FY 2000, the INS also reduced the processing time for employment-based petitions from 18 months to 90 days. By transmitting fingerprints electronically to the FBI, the INS decreased the average processing time for background investigation checks from 21 days to one day. The INS enhanced its customer service quality and accessibility by expanding the National Customer Service Center's live, toll-free (1-800 telephone) assistance area across the U.S. mainland, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam. All of these accomplishments were achieved within the scope of the overall FY 2000 immigration services workload of 6 million petitions received and approximately 6.5 million completed, resulting in a pending workload of approximately 3.9 million. In FY 2001, the INS continues working diligently to meet its goal of completing 800,000 naturalization and 800,000 adjustment of status applications.

The INS faces significant challenges in delivering immigration services in the years ahead: (1) eliminating backlogs in all immigration benefit applications; (2) managing and responding to new and changing workloads; (3) ensuring process integrity;

and (4) positioning itself for the future. Over the last several years, the INS has seen a dramatic rise in the number of applications and petitions received. The Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act of 2000 amendments alone will add an estimated additional caseload of 2.3 million applications and petitions in FY 2001 and 1.2 million applications and petitions in FY 2002 to the current 6.9 million applications received annually, a 26 percent increase over a two-year period. Because this additional workload will strain the existing infrastructure, the INS is exploring new ways of doing business to manage the new workload effectively while continuing to tackle the backlogged caseload aggressively. Premium Processing Service and electronic filing are examples of these new ways of doing business. Besides increased productivity, the INS continues working towards achieving process integrity through its anti-fraud and quality control efforts. Most importantly, the INS strives for excellence in customer service through process reengineering, effective use of technology, and greater accessibility to information and services.

### **Premium Processing Service**

As a result of the overwhelming backlogs in recent years, it has taken INS from 60 days to more than one year to process certain business cases. In order to provide better service to business customers and to begin implementing new ways of doing business that more efficiently manage its workloads, INS proposed a Premium Processing Service for business cases in FY 2001. In the proposal, INS guarantees that businesses that pay for Premium Processing Service will receive an approval, denial, or request for evidence on their cases within 15 days of filing. If INS fails to meet this guarantee, it will refund the fee to the business.

In the FY 2001 budget, INS was given authority to charge a voluntary \$1000 fee to provide Premium Processing Service for business cases. The INS expects to implement Premium Processing Service in early summer for some applications. The INS estimates that, for FY 2001, the Premium Processing Service fee could generate approximately \$25 million in additional revenue. These funds will be used to support the Premium Processing Service on the business cases for which the fee is paid, to detect and deter fraud in benefit programs, and to support backlog elimination efforts. In addition, other INS customers will benefit from the implementation of Premium Processing Service through experience gained from the new business processes and because revenues received in excess of the program costs would be used to pay for infrastructure needs in adjudications and customer service.

### **Legal Immigration Family Equity (LIFE) Act**

The LIFE Act, which was enacted on December 21, 2000, will have a major impact on INS' service functions this year and for several years into the future. It focuses on six primary immigration benefits. The LIFE Act reauthorized section 245(i) of the INA, providing INS with the authority to adjust the status of certain persons unlawfully in the United States. Eligible individuals had until April 30, 2001 to file a qualifying

petition or application with INS or the Department of Labor to sponsor beneficiaries for legal immigration. The Administration supports an extension of this deadline.

The LIFE Act provides for a “Late Legalization” program that reopens the Legalization Program authorized by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1996. This will allow members of three class action lawsuits – Catholic Social Services (CSS), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and Zambrano -- to file to adjust status. In addition, the Act expands the existing Family Unity Program to include eligible spouses and minor children of “Late Legalization” applicants.

The Act creates a new “V” Visa classification for the spouses and children of lawful permanent residents who have been waiting three or more years to immigrate. It also creates a new “K” Visa non-immigrant classification for spouses and children of U.S. citizens.

Finally, the LIFE Act contains amendments to the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA) and the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act (HRIFA). The NACARA/HRIFA amendments lift restrictions on waiving certain inadmissibility grounds relating to previous removals and unlawful presence, and eliminate bars to eligibility based on reinstatement of a previous order.

Workload will significantly increase as a result of the LIFE Act. In addition to the residency benefits, all LIFE Act benefits authorize employment for eligible applicants. Prior to passage of the LIFE Act, INS projected it would receive approximately 6,922,000 applications in FY 2001 and approximately 6,847,000 in FY 2002. The Act will increase processing workload by 2.3 million applications and petitions in FY 2001 and 1.2 million in FY 2002, increases of 34 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

Process changes and personnel increases for the LIFE Act workload will be funded from LIFE application/petition revenue. To process the additional workload, a reprogramming notification to increase spending authority of the Immigration Examinations Fee Account will be submitted.

In order to minimize the impact of LIFE Act application processing on the District Offices and Service Centers, V, K and Late Legalization cases will be processed at a temporary facility located near the National Records Center. Applications under section 245(i) will continue to be processed at INS' Service Centers and District Offices, and interviews for Late Legalization Applicants will be conducted at the District Offices.

### **Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000**

On October 28, 2000, the President signed into law the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (VTVPA). The VTVPA combines two major pieces of legislation: the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the Violence Against Women Act of 2000. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act is a comprehensive statute that addresses the heinous practice of trafficking in persons through a multifaceted approach that focuses on enhanced prosecution of traffickers, protection of and assistance to victims, and prevention efforts.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act will affect the operation of every component of INS to some extent. The new act amends portions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to add a new nonimmigrant classification for victims of severe forms of trafficking -- T visas -- of which 5,000 are available annually. In addition, it prescribes protections for victims while in Federal custody and provides for the authorization of continued presence for alien victims of severe forms of trafficking in order to assist in the investigation or prosecution of trafficking cases. INS is currently drafting regulations to implement the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2000 continues and strengthens our commitment to ending domestic violence and sexual assault. While VAWA 2000 contains many important provisions, Title V of the Act addresses the particular problems that confront immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. It makes improvements to the immigration relief afforded battered immigrants by the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, and creates a new nonimmigrant classification -- a U visa -- for victims of certain serious crimes suffered by vulnerable aliens. This new classification

provides a mechanism for crime victims who may be helpful to the investigation or prosecution of the specified crimes to remain temporarily in the United States. The statute also gives the Attorney General the discretion, in certain circumstances, to allow nonimmigrants holding T and U visas to become legal permanent residents.

### **Immigration Services – FY 2002 Request**

The INS is proud of its accomplishment of processing over one million naturalization applications during FY 2000, and plans to continue the quality and timely processing of applications. The INS agrees with Congress that all immigration benefit applications should be processed in six months or less. The President's FY 2002 budget includes \$100 million to implement the first installment of the President's five-year, \$500 million initiative to process all applications within six months and provide quality service to all legal immigrants, citizens, businesses and other INS customers. These resources will be used for increased personnel, enhanced information technology and other resources to make customer satisfaction a priority. The INS is currently working with the Administration to develop a detailed backlog elimination plan to begin in FY 2002.

### **Electronic Filing**

The INS recognizes that electronic filing will improve customer service and convenience of applying for immigration benefits. Although INS is not yet in a position to make all immigration benefit applications available for electronic filing, INS is committed to making multiple applications available for electronic filing in 2002. The initiative represents another new way that INS is thinking about doing business in order to improve management of its workload while delivering better customer service.

### **Conclusion**

The FY 2002 request will provide INS with resources needed to carry out an effective immigration strategy. As you know, this Administration is committed to restructuring and splitting the INS into two agencies with separate chains of command that report to one policy official within the Department of Justice. I look forward to working with the Subcommittee on this and other important immigration issues. With your continued support, we can add to the improvements that have already been made, address problem areas and continue to ensure the integrity of our benefits processing.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Subcommittee may have.